

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 02255 071559Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2255

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION

REF: STATE 76882

1. IN ABSENCE KHADDAM IN NEW DELHI AND WITH HIS DEPUTY
ILL TODAY, I MET WITH PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL ADVISOR
ADIB DAOUDI TO MAKE POINTS PARA 3, REFTEL. DAOUDI SAID
HE WOULD RELAY POINTS TO ASAD IMMEDIATE.

2. DAOUDI BRIDLED VISIBLY AT WORKING "THE IMPRESSION HAS
BEEN CREATED THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE ADOPTED AN ACQUIESCENT
OR MORE PERMISSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINLINE PALESTINIAN
ELEMENTS." NOTING THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT SYRIA MAY
OR MAY NOT BE DOING, HE FELT OUR STATEMENT WAS NONETHE-
LESS EQUIVALENT TO SAYING USG ACCEPTED VALIDITY OF PRESS
REPORTS. I SAID FROM CONTEXT OF TALKING POINTS IT WAS

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CLEAR WE WERE MAKING NO ACCUSATION BUT WOULD WELCOME ANY
COMMENTS THE SYRIANS WOULD CARE TO MAKE TO US ON THIS
ISSUE.

3. DAOUDI THEN BACKED OFF AND SAID AS FAR AS HE WAS CON-
CERNED, WE WERE MISSING THE CENTRAL POINT OF THE WHOLE SOUTH
LEBANESE PROBLEM: ISRAELI BAD FAITH. GOI IS ATEMPTING

SABOTAGE ALL CHANCES FOR PEACE THROUGH SEEKING TO MAINTAIN AND EXPLOIT TROUBLED CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTH. ISRAELIS HAD HUMILIATED SYRIA PUBLICLY ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF ITS FORCES IN NABATIYEH LAST JANUARY/FEBRUARY. USG SHOULD POINT OUT TO ISRAELIS THAT THEY WERE "PLAYING WITH FIRE" AND DRAGGING ALL PARTIES DEEPER INTO DANGERS WHICH, IF MATTERS DEVELOP ADVERSELY, WOULD NOT BE LIMITED TO THE SOUTHERN SECTOR OF LEBANON. AS FAR AS DAMASCUS IS CONCERNED, ISRAEL AIMS AT SABOTAGING ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACE, PERHAPS INCLUDING FRUSTRATING PROSPECT FOR ANY USEFUL OUTCOME OF THE ASAD/CARTER MEETING. ISRAELIS ARE PLAYING FOR TIME, DAOUDI CONTINUED, IN HOPES THEY CAN AVOID A PEACE CONFERENCE, OTHER THAN ONE HELD EXCLUSIVELY ON THEIR TERMS.

4. REPLIED WE WERE SPEAKING TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WITH THE AIM OF CONTAINING A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CHAIN REACTION IN THE AREA. WE WERE TALKING TO THE ISRAELIS AS WELL AS TO THE LEBANESE LEADERSHIP, EXPRESSING TO BOTH OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION.

5. DAOUDI THEN REFERRED TO DANY CHAMOUN'S INTERVIEW WITH NYT CORRESPONDENT TANNER, COMMENTING THAT CHAMOUNISTS WERE PURSUING A "NIGHTMARE VISION" OF HOW TO PROTECT CHRISTIAN INTERESTS. SARKIS, HE KNEW, HAD APPEALED RECENTLY TO HUSSEIN TO TALK DIRECTLY TO CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND URGE HIM NOT TO CONTINUE ON PRESENT COURSE. EMPHASIZING HE SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM ASAD, DAOUDI SAID
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HE HOPED WE COULD EXPRESS OUR CONCERN DIRECTLY TO THE CHAMOUNISTS, WHO ARE FLAUNTING THEIR READINESS TO WORK OPENLY WITH THE ISRAELIS. BY SUCH CONDUCT, CHAMOUNISTS WERE AROUSING HOSTILITY NOT ONLY IN LEBANON AND SYRIA BUT THROUGHOUT THE ARAB WORLD. THIS RISKED LONG RUN ADVERSE EFFECTS TO THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AS WHOLE. I NOTED THAT SYRIA ITSELF HAD HAD SOME SUCCESS DURING 1976 IN WEANING EXTREMISTS OF VARIOUS PERSUASIONS AWAY FROM THEIR MAINLINE GROUPS, BE THEY LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, MOSLEMS OR PALESTINIANS. PERHAPS SYRIA MIGHT ALSO HAVE WAY TO APPROACH THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, URGING THEM TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT SITUATION IN THE SOUTH. ADDED THAT WE WERE WORKING FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH SARKIS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION IN LEBANON. FOR THIS REASON, BELIEVED THAT ANY APPROACH WE MIGHT MAKE TO CHAMOUN AND OTHERS IN THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP WOULD ONLY BE DONE AFTER TOUCHING BASE WITH SARKIS. DAOUDI AGREED THIS WAS CORRECT PROCEDURE.

6. DAOUDI CONCLUDED WITH BITTER REFERENCE TO THE "PROVOCATIVE WAY THE ISRAELIS HAD PLAYED UP THEIR VICTORY" OVER SYRIA CONCERNING SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM NABATIYEH. HE REPEATED FAMILIAR POSITION THAT SYRIA HAD ONLY TWO GOALS IN LEBANON: TO RESTORE LEBANESE SECURITY AND STABILITY, AND THEREBY, TO PROECT ITSELF. ISRAELIS. ISRAELIS WERE FRUSTRATING ACHIEVEMENT BOTH GOALS IN TMF EVIDENT INTENT OF CREATING DIVISIONS IN ARAB RANKS AND IN PARTICULAR OF WEAKENING ASAD.

7. COMMENT:

I EXPECT TO SEE ASAD IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO AND MAY WELL HEAR SIMILAR COMMENTS FROM HIM.
MURPHY

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